



Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Norwottuck Rail Trail Rehabilitation
Public Comment Summary

February 25, 2009
R. Bergfors

Project Description:

In spring 2008, the DCR released a Request for Responses soliciting design proposals for the Norwottuck Rail Trail Rehabilitation project. The following is an excerpt from that document.

NORWOTTUCK RAIL TRAIL PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

The rail trail right-of-way is used as a migration corridor for people, animals and plants. The trail serves a variety of recreational users and commuters, including the young and old, bicyclists, walkers, runners, people with disabilities, roller bladers, dog-walkers, adults pushing baby strollers, adults pulling children in bicycle trailers and tandem bicycles; all vying for limited space on the existing eight-foot wide paved trail. Additionally, the full width of the property right-of-way is important to resident and migratory wildlife as necessary habitat. The trail corridor is a greenway with both native plants and undesirable invasive plants needing forest management, ecological restoration and other measures to retain the “green tunnel” along the trail. Trail improvements are likely to increase trail use, as are increasing development and local population growth, a rise in bicycle tourism, and trends towards more healthful lifestyles. A successful design will balance the needs of all users for their safety and well-being today, as well as into the future. DCR is seeking a team that takes these issues into consideration and best demonstrates a team approach and project understanding of the following key objectives:

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Improve safety of the trail and road crossings.
- Improve the condition of bridges and tunnels along the trail.
- Involve public outreach and participation in the design process using the MassHighway Project Development and Design Guide, Chapter 2 (PDDG).
- Improve trail parking.
- Identify and resolve drainage and erosion issues incorporating bioengineering methods where appropriate.
- Maximize Universal Accessibility opportunities as well as compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MA AAB) Code.
- Develop a Beaver and Muskrat Management Plan to address on-going trail damage.

- Promote and preserve healthy native plant communities; identify sensitive ecological areas for protection as well as opportunities for restoration or enhancement.
- Develop a Vegetation Management Plan to control and discourage spread of invasive plants.
- Evaluate adjacent land use to identify and resolve encroachments, needs for screening buffers and potential for future impacts to the trail corridor.
- Incorporate design elements fitting with the historic regional landscape.
- Develop a trail signage and interpretive wayside plan.
- Evaluate lighting systems including hybrid lighting at tunnels and parking areas.

As a result of the bidding process, Stantec Consulting Services Inc. was awarded a contract for design and a Notice to Proceed was issued in April 2008. Their sub-consultants include Bryant Associates (surveying); Root Engineering (dam specialist); and, Urban Forestry Solutions Inc. (certified arborist). Site investigation began immediately with aerial photography, field surveying, wetland delineation, evaluation of trees by certified arborist, etc.

Introduction:

Public comments were solicited as part of the Public Outreach Plan presented during the Public Information Meeting held on October 29, 2008 at Hopkins Academy High School, Hadley, MA. The community was invited to contribute to the design process by commenting on the trail condition and rehabilitation project. People who were unable to attend the Public Information Meeting could view the PowerPoint presentation and printed handout on the project web page at <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/projects/norwottuck>

Comments could be submitted in many ways, including the following,

1. Spoken comments made during the comment period of the public information meeting. These comments were written by DCR and Stantec staff and compiled into a meeting summary.
2. Written comments made on sticky notes and stuck to specific locations on an ortho-photo of the rail trail during the Public Information Meeting.
3. Written comments on a sheet provided in the Public Information Meeting handout and submitted during the night of the meeting or mailed in before December 1, 2008.
4. Written comments mailed in by December 1, 2008.
5. Email message sent by December 1, 2008.
6. Written comments made as part of the “Pre-Design Trail User Survey” available online through the Norwottuck Rail Trail Rehabilitation project web page and submitted by December 31, 2008.
7. News articles, editorial columns and letters to the editor. There were 5 articles or opinion editorials published in the Daily Hampshire Gazette between October 22 and November 18, 2008.

A contact email address and mailing address were provided by DCR during the Public Information Meeting presentation, on the meeting handout and on the project web page. The project web page link appears on the DCR home page in the Projects box. Also, the contact information appeared in a Daily Hampshire Gazette news article that appeared on October 29, 2008 and in editorial column on November 10, 2008.

A contact phone number was provided on the Public Information Meeting announcement, printed on flyers posted along the rail trail by NRT Advisory Committee members prior to the Public Information Meeting and printed in the Daily Hampshire Gazette on October 29, 2008. However, no phone calls were received as of December 30, 2008.

Prior to the Public Information Meeting, a meeting announcement was emailed to known contacts including local elected officials and heads of town departments such as police chief, fire chief, Departments of Public Works, town manager/administrator/mayor offices and members of the Norwottuck Rail Trail Advisory Committee (NRTAC). After October 29, an email listserv was created with the original list of contact addresses and additional addresses acquired through an auto-subscribe function added to the project web page. Also, people who participated in the Pre-Design Trail User Survey were offered an option to have their email address added to the listserv for future notifications. On November 25, members of the listserv were sent a project update including the deadline for written comments. As of February 25, 2009, the listserv has 106 members.

Written comments received after the December 1, 2008 deadline were read and will be considered to the extent possible, but may not be included in this summary. Notes from the Public Information Meeting on October 29, 2008 are included in Appendix A. Written comments are included in Appendix B. Copies of newspaper clippings are included in Appendix C. The Pre-Design Trail User Survey closed on December 31, 2008. All survey responses are included in Appendix D.

Summary:

Guiding Components:

During the Public Information Meeting, a structure of seven guiding components was presented as a framework for organizing comments into categories. Comments received were sorted into one of these categories on a Comment Summary Table. However, it should be noted that there is often an overlap between categories and many comments could be assigned to more than one category. The seven guiding components are listed alphabetically as below.

- Accessibility
- Construction Issues
- Cultural and Historical Elements
- Maintenance and Operations
- Natural Resources and Wildlife Safety
- Path and Infrastructure Repair
- Trail User Experience

Weighted interpretations:

Comments submitted by those speaking on behalf of a larger group, organization or governing authority may carry more weight than singular comments made by individuals speaking on their own behalf. For example, a letter on behalf of an advocacy group such as the MassBike Pioneer

Valley Chapter represents a group of people speaking in one voice. However, all comments are accepted as valid and will be considered appropriately during the decision making process particularly with regards to site specific safety concerns. In the Comment Summary Table, comments submitted by a group are tallied in a separate column from comments made by individuals who are tallied by town.

Trends and observations:

There are a total of 64 individual respondents with several people using more than one means for submitting comments. Fifty-two (81%) of the respondents identified themselves as bicyclists with a fewer number identifying themselves solely as walkers. The disparity in responses from walkers versus bicyclists may be attributed cyclists being more organized in formal clubs such as MassBike and having access to newsletters or updates through those organizations. Older adults comprise the majority of respondents who identified themselves as walkers. However, personal observation is that there are many young adult walkers especially in the Amherst area and near the malls in Hadley. Unfortunately, this public outreach effort did not tap into the young adults or undergraduate college students of the area and there was very little student input. All respondents who identified themselves as students are graduate students who bike commute.

Bike commuters represent 45% of respondents with at least one mother reporting that she brings her child to school via bicycle.

General trends:

- Almost all respondents ask for new pavement and root heaves to be eliminated.
- Majority of respondents want trail widening, where possible.
- Most bike commuters request snow plowing trail or parts of trail and year round maintenance for safe access over Connecticut River Bridge.
- Many requests to save the shade, minimize tree removals, use native species for tree replacements and preserve the scenic beauty of the trail.
- Many requests for and no objections against adding a yellow centerline.
- Request for more bike racks, especially in vicinity of bus stops for times when the bus bike carriers are full.
- Request for more restrooms/portable toilets especially at Station Road parking lot.

Key points of controversy

Transportation vs. Recreation:

There are strong opinions from bike commuters that transportation and the needs of the bike commuting community should be the first priority and recreation should be secondary. However, the trail user survey indicates that 80% of the 40 survey respondents use the trail for recreation. Meanwhile, non-bikers, particularly older adults living in senior housing communities abutting the rail trail, want safer conditions for walking.

Pre-Design Trail User Survey: Question 10 – For what purposes do you use the rail trail? Select ALL that apply.

RESPONSES	no data	recreation	watch birds & wildlife	fitness	commuting to school	commuting to work	access conservation lands	go to movies	dog-walking	shopping	other
Total	1	32	12	27	3	17	8	5	1	19	2
Percent of total surveys	2.5%	80%	30%	67.5%	7.5%	42.5%	20%	12.5%	2.5%	47.5%	5%

Trail Widening:

Hadley Board of Selectmen, State Representative John W. Scibak, the Norwottuck Rail Trail Advisory Committee (NRTAC), MassBike/Pioneer Valley Chapter (PVC) and 19 individuals ask for trail widening or widening where possible. Based on comments received, this position is contrasted by Chairperson of the Hadley Conservation Commission (Alexandra Dawson) and 2 individuals who oppose trail widening. Opposition to trail widening is based primarily on concerns about tree loss, wetland impacts and overall cost for construction.

Snow Plowing:

NRTAC, MassBike/PVC, State Senator Stanley C. Rosenberg and 8 individuals ask for snow plowing with an emphasis on winter access over the Connecticut River Bridge. When the rail trail bridge is snow covered, cyclists must ride the shoulder on the Coolidge Bridge (Rt. 9). Some respondents suggest compromises of just plowing from Damon Road to Cross Path Road, while others ask for year round maintenance of the entire rail trail. Most requests for plowing come from bike commuters. Several bike commuters from Northampton note that the town plows their extensive system of bike paths. There are no direct objections to snow plowing. However, there are four respondents who cross-country ski and two that snowshoe on the trail.

Tree Removals:

There is a general consensus to keep the trail as shaded as possible and preserve the “green tunnel”. Chairperson of the Hadley Conservation Commission (Alexandra Dawson) opposes wholesale tree removals. Judith Eiseman (Kestrel Trust) expressed that they don’t want to see habitat loss or tree removals. NRTAC requests native species for tree replacements and planting conifers between Cross Path Rd and CT River Bridge for screening from Route 9 traffic. There have been several requests for improved screening between Route 9 and the rail trail in that area.

Pre-Design Trail User Survey:

An online survey was created to inform the design process for the Norwottuck Rail Trail Rehabilitation. The survey also provided an alternate format for the public to comment and provide input on the project that extended beyond the public information meeting and written comment period.

The questions were written to gather information from people who use the trail in order to help the design team understand how they use the trail and how to make improvements. The survey was open for comments from the time of the Public Information Meeting on October 29th to December 31st, 2008.

There were 40 participants in the Pre-Design Trail User Survey. Below is a summary of responses to each question with exception of questions 17 & 18 which were type-in boxes that permitted lengthy comments. Copies of the complete responses are included in Appendix D.

1. In which town do you live? There was no type-in response box for “other” in this question.

RESPONSES	no answer	Amherst	Belchertown	Hadley	Northampton	Other
Total	0	11	2	3	15	9
Percent of total surveys	0%	28%	5%	8%	38%	23%

2. What is your age range?

RESPONSES	no data	0-6	7-12	13-17	18-21	22-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	70+
Total	0	0	0	0	0	3	11	10	9	6	1
Percent of total surveys	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	28%	25%	23%	15%	3%

3a. Are you a student?

RESPONSES	no	yes	no data
Total	37	2	1
Percent of total surveys	92.5%	5%	2.5%

As anyone would observe during a typical day on the rail trail, the response to this question is more reflective of participation in the survey and public process by the student community than it is of their actual use of the trail.

3b. If yes, what is your current grade level?

4. If you are a student, which school do you attend?

The two respondents who identify themselves as students are graduate students at UMass Amherst.

5. How often do you use the rail trail?

RESPONSES	no data	every day	2-3x / week	1x / week	2-3x / month	1x / month or less	only once	never
Total	0	8	13	3	9	7	0	0
Percent of total surveys	0%	20%	32.5%	7.5%	22.5%	17.5%	0%	0%

6. When do you typically use the rail trail?

a. Time of year: Select ALL that apply

RESPONSES	no data	winter	spring	summer	fall
Total	0	17	40	39	39
Percent of total surveys	0%	42.5%	100%	97.5%	97.5%

Note that most of the respondents who replied that they use the trail in winter or year-round are also bike commuters.

b. Days of the week: Select ALL that apply

RESPONSES	no data	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Total	0	33	33	32	31	34	29	27
Percent of total surveys	0%	82.5%	82.5%	80%	77.5%	85%	72.5%	67.5%

c. Times of day: Select ALL that apply

RESPONSES	no data	morning	afternoon	evening	no data
Total	0	27	34	20	0
Percent of total surveys	0%	67.5%	85%	50%	0%

7a. Do you bring other people on the rail trail?

RESPONSES	no	yes	no data
Total	7	33	0
Percent of total surveys	17.5%	82.5%	0%

7b. If yes, how many people are usually in your group?

RESPONSES	no data	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+
Total	7	6	12	7	6	1	0	1
Percent of total surveys	17.5%	15%	30%	17.5%	15%	2.5%	0%	2.5%

7c. If yes, who do you usually bring to the rail trail? Select ALL that apply

RESPONSES	no data	family	friend	exercise class	students	club or group	other
Total	7	25	17	0	1	5	3
Percent of total surveys	17.5%	62.5%	42.5%	0%	2.5%	12.5%	7.5%

The three responses to “other” included the following typed descriptions.

- visitors
- colleague and fellow bike commuter
- sometimes ride with family. Usually commute to work.

7d. What are their ages? Select ALL that apply

RESPONSES	no data	0-6	7-12	13-17	18-21	22-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	70+
Total	7	8	10	7	2	7	15	15	10	8	0
Percent of total surveys	17.5%	20%	25%	18%	5%	18%	38%	38%	25%	20%	0%

8a. How do you usually get to the rail trail? Select ALL that apply

RESPONSES	no answer	bike	drive	rollerblade/skate	skateboard	bus	walk	wheelchair	other
Total	2	28	7	0	0	0	4	0	0
Percent of total surveys	4%	54%	14%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%

8b. If you drive to the trail, where do you park? Select ALL that apply

RESPONSES	no data	Elwell S.P.	Mtn. Farms Mall	Mill Lane	Station Rd	Warren Wright Rd	Other
Total	25	9	3	0	4	2	2
Percent of total surveys	62.5%	22.5%	7.5%	0%	10%	5%	5%

Type in answers for “other” are as listed.

- Amherst College or ride from home
- Trailside Bicycles

Note that in the previous question (8a), 54% of respondents answered that they arrive by bike; which accounts for the high number of “no data” responses here. Of the 14% of respondents who drive to the rail trail, the majority (22.5%) park at the Damon Road parking lot in Elwell State Park.

9. What are your main entry points on the rail trail? (type in answer)

Northampton:

- 1 Northampton
- 1 Bicycle path from Florence to CT River bridge
- 1 Florence Center
- 1 near RR track/King St in Northampton
- 1 North St, Northampton (coming from downtown using the new trail)
- 1 Hazel St. off Northampton Rd and all points west
- 1 Northampton Extension at Damon Rd.
(Northampton Rail Trail at Prospect Avenue)
- 1 North St, Northampton (coming from downtown using the new trail)
- 1 Bates St, Northampton
- 1 Northampton bridge/new N'ton section
- 10 SUB-TOTAL of entry points west of Woodmont Rd.

- 4 Woodmont Rd.
- 12 Damon Rd.

Hadley:

- 1 West St. (Esselon café given as landmark)
- 2 Middle St.
- 1 East St.
- 1 Route 116
- 4 South Maple St. (Maple St. to head south to Bay Rd.)
- 3 Whole Foods (Mountain Farms Mall)

Amherst:

- 6 Swift Way Connector (UMass spur/UMass connector)
- 3 South East St.
- 1 Behind Amherst College tennis courts
- 2 Amherst College
- 1 Mill Lane at South East St.
- 1 South Pleasant St.
- 2 KC Trail (KC Trail from Southeast St)
- 3 Station Rd.
- 1 Amherst Farmers Supply
- 3 Brickyard trail entrance near Station Road (brickyard trail thru the woods from Hop Brook)

Belchertown:

- 2 Warren Wright Rd.

All respondents could answer this question regardless of how they arrive to or travel on the rail trail. For trail users approaching the rail trail from the west (Northampton, Florence, etc.), there seems to be weak identity for the trail west of Damon Road. DCR should look at better “branding” for this section of the rail trail with a clearly established point of beginning for DCR’s jurisdiction at Woodmont Road. It appears that most trail users are approaching from the west of the Connecticut River Bridge whether by parking at the Damon Road parking lot or accessing the trail from local streets or bike paths.

10. For what purposes do you use the rail trail? Select ALL that apply

RESPONSES	no data	recreation	watch birds & wildlife	fitness	commuting to school	commuting to work	access conservation lands	go to movies	dog-walking	shopping	other
Total	1	32	12	27	3	17	8	5	1	19	2
Percent of total surveys	2.5%	80%	30%	67.5%	7.5%	42.5%	20%	12.5%	2.5%	47.5%	5%

Type in answers for “other” are as listed.

- errands
- bringing my son to school
- as an alternative to riding bike on the road to travel between towns in general
- riding to Amherst (from Northampton)
- walking to and from synagogue almost every Saturday

11. What are your main activities on the rail trail? Select ALL that apply.

RESPONSES	no data	cycling	push a baby carriage	snowshoeing	walk	Rollerblade/skate	use a wheelchair	skateboard	x-country ski	other
Total	1	39	1	2	13	3	0	0	4	7
Percent of total surveys	2.5%	97.5%	2.5%	5%	32.5%	8%	0%	0%	10%	18%

Type in answers for “other” are as listed.

- 4 – running
- 2 – jogging
- 1 - birding

12. If you ride a bike, what type do you use? Select ALL that apply

RESPONSES	no data	2-wheel bike	recumbent bike	hand-cycle	tri-cycle	duet wheelchair tandem	bike w/child extension	bike w/utility trailer	bike w/child trailer	recumbent tri-cycle	tandem bicycle	other
Total	1	39	3	1	0	1	3	5	2	2	3	0
Percent of total surveys	2.5%	97.5%	7.5%	3%	0%	2.5%	7.5%	13%	5%	5%	7.5%	0%

Although the majority of survey respondents report using standard 2-wheeled bicycles, it should be noted that DCR’s Universal Access program reports providing weekly programs on the rail trail with adaptive cycles (including recumbent bike, hand-cycle, tri-

cycle, duet wheelchair tandem, recumbent tri-cycle and tandem bicycle). In 2008, the UA program reported averaging 30-40 participants weekly per program day from June through September with approximately 500-600 participants per year. In addition, Trailside Bicycles, a local business located along the rail trail, has two hand-cycles and one wheelchair tandem available for rent. Many respondents who report using the hybrid or specialized design bicycles or tri-cycles also report using a standard 2-wheeled bike.

13. Do you exercise more because you use this rail trail?

RESPONSES	no	yes	no data
Total	11	28	1
Percent of total surveys	28%	70%	2.5%

14a. Are you aware of DCR's Universal Access Programs on this rail trail?

RESPONSES	no	yes	no data
Total	16	23	1
Percent of total surveys	40%	58%	2.5%

14b. If yes, do you participate in their cycling programs on this rail trail?

RESPONSES	no	yes	no data
Total	28	3	9
Percent of total surveys	70%	8%	23%

15a. If you use the rail trail for bicycling, do you also bicycle on the road?

RESPONSES	no	yes	no data
Total	3	36	1
Percent of total surveys	7.5%	90%	2.5%

15b. If not, why?

RESPONSES	no answer	safety concerns	inconvenience	too far	other
Total	37	3	0	0	0
Percent of total surveys	92.5%	7.5%	0%	0%	0%

Only three respondents answered "no" to question 15a and all three express safety concerns as the reason that they do not ride their bikes on the road.

16a. Are you aware of other multi-use trails in the area?

RESPONSES	no	yes	no data
Total	11	28	1
Percent of total surveys	27.5%	70%	2.5%

16b. If yes, which ones?

- 14 Manhan trail
- 13 Northampton Bike Path
- 5 Easthampton
- 1 Rt 5 to Easthampton
- 3 Northampton Bike Path to Florence
- 1 Northampton RT (King St. to Look Park – “which I use more than the Damon Rd to Belchertown RT”)
- 1 Belchertown Land Trust bought gravel trail but I haven't been on it.
- 1 the trail from State Street up to JFK
- 1 Look Park bike trail
- 2 Ashuwillticook
- 1 Pittsfield/Lanesboro
- 3 Turner’s Falls, Miller’s/Turners Falls
- 1 Canalside trail
- 1 Montague canal
- 2 Greenfield
- 1 Norwottuck Extension (Woodmont Rd. to Damon Rd.?)
- 1 Swift Way/UMass Connector (“all on my commute, so I use them often”)
- 1 Agawam
- 1 “all”
- 1 “others further away”
- 1 “Don't recall names they cross the trail everywhere though” (presumably, this answer refers to hiking trails in Amherst)

16c. If yes, how often do you use them in comparison to the Norwottuck Rail Trail?

RESPONSES	no answer	less often	more often	not at all
Total	14	17	7	2
Percent of total surveys	35%	42.5%	17.5%	5%

17. What do you like about the Norwottuck Rail Trail? (type-in box)

18. What would you like to see improved? (type-in box)

Responses to these questions are included on the Public Comment Summary table and in Appendix D. Pre-Design Trail User Surveys.

	Name	Affiliation or Primary Use	Town of Residence	Bike Commuter	Attended Public Information Meeting	Spoken Comments during Public Info. Meeting	Written comments during Public Info Meeting	Written comment Sheet or Letter	Email	Newspaper column or Letter to the Editor	Online Pre-Design Trail User Survey
1	Alexandra Dawson	Chairwoman - Hadley Conservation Commission	Hadley		1	29-Oct-08	29-Oct-08			10-Nov-08	
2	Andy Morris-Friedman	Hadley Rep., NRTAC. Cyclist, walker, snow shoer, birdwatcher	Hadley	1	1					22-Oct-08	8-Nov-08
3	anonymous	cyclist, rollerblader									11-Nov-08
4	anonymous	cyclist, walker, runner	Amherst								10-Nov-08
5	Beverly Weeks	walker and resident at Greenleaves Senior Housing Community	Amherst		1	29-Oct-08			2-Nov-08		
6	Bob Adams	participant in Universal Access programs – hand cycles	Northampton		1	29-Oct-08					
7	Bob Aronson	cyclist	Northampton		1	29-Oct-08					12-Nov-08
8	Brandon McPhail	Umass Graduate student. Cyclist, birdwatcher	Northampton	1	1	29-Oct-08					10-Nov-08
9	Dan Clawson	cyclist	Northampton	1				26-Oct-08			
10	Dave Wzodek	abutter, resident	Hadley					14-Nov-08			
11	David White	abutter, resident	Amherst		1		29-Oct-08				
12	Donna McGee	cyclist	Hatfield	1	1		29-Oct-08				
13	Dorothy Baumann	cyclist, walker; abutting business owner "Trailside Bikes"	Hadley	1	1						10-Nov-08
14	E. Grace Johnston	cyclist, walker, runner	Hadley	1	1			12-Nov-08			11-Nov-08
15	Frank Olbris	member of NRTAC	Northampton		1	29-Oct-08					
16	James Lowenthal	Pres. MassBike Pioneer Valley Chapter; formal comments from PVC; cyclist		1					1-Dec-08		
17	Jerry Devine	Chairman, Hadley Board of Selectmen			1	29-Oct-08					

	Name	Affiliation or Primary Use	Town of Residence	Bike Commuter	Attended Public Information Meeting	Spoken Comments during Public Info. Meeting	Written comments during Public Info Meeting	Written comment Sheet or Letter	Email	Newspaper column or Letter to the Editor	Online Pre-Design Trail User Survey
18	Joel Dansky	bike commuter to Northampton & Hampshire College, walker	Northampton	1	1						14-Nov-08
19	Jonathan O'Keefe	cyclist	Amherst		1						11-Nov-08
20	Judith Eiseman	Chairwoman, The Kestrel Trust	Pelham		1		29-Oct-08				
21	Karen Foster	advocate of Universal Access	Easthampton							14-Nov-08	
22	Leonard Gnatek	walker/wildlife watcher	Hadley		1	29-Oct-08					
23	Liz Sturgen	Manhan Rail Trail Committee, cyclist	Easthampton	1	1		29-Oct-08				
24	Lola Reid	cyclist, walker, birdwatcher	Northampton	1	1	29-Oct-08					10-Nov-08
25	Lynn Grabowski	cyclist. regular attendee of NRTAC meetings		1	1	29-Oct-08					
26	Lynn Smith	cyclist	Belchertown	1	1	29-Oct-08					
27	Marilyn Billings		Amherst		1	29-Oct-08					
28	Marvin J. Ward	cyclist	Williamsburg							18-Nov-08	10-Nov-08
29	Melinda Nielson	bike commuter to Northampton		1	1	29-Oct-08					
30	Michael Sullivan	Northampton Rep., NRTAC. Cyclist	Northampton	1					29-Oct-08		10-Nov-08
31	Michele Morris-Friedman	Cyclist and participant in Universal Access programs	Hadley		1	29-Oct-08					
32	R. Susan (Susie) Woods	property owner of 43 West St. and 70 Russell St.	Hadley		1	29-Oct-08	29-Oct-08				
33	Rich Cairn	cyclist	Amherst	1					15-Nov-08		15-Nov-08
34	Robert Kusner	Chair and Amherst Rep., NRTAC; formal comments from NRTAC; cyclist	Amherst		1				16-Nov-08		
35	Sara Langseth	bike commuter to Northampton	Amherst	1	1	29-Oct-08					10-Nov-08
36	Tim Coppolo		Amherst		1	29-Oct-08					
37	Wendy Cooper	cyclist	Northampton	1					1-Dec-08		
38	William A. Gold	walker	Northampton					19-Nov-08			

	Name	Affiliation or Primary Use	Town of Residence	Bike Commuter	Attended Public Information Meeting	Spoken Comments during Public Info. Meeting	Written comments during Public Info Meeting	Written comment Sheet or Letter	Email	Newspaper column or Letter to the Editor	Online Pre-Design Trail User Survey
39		walker	Amherst								18-Nov-08
40		cyclist, walker	Amherst	1							25-Nov-08
41		cyclist, walker, rollerblader	Northampton								10-Nov-08
42		cyclist, walker, X-country skier	Amherst								10-Nov-08
43		cyclist	Northampton	1							11-Nov-08
44		cyclist, birdwatcher	Northampton								11-Nov-08
45		Cyclist	Other								28-Nov-08
46		cyclist, X-country ski	Amherst								10-Nov-08
47		cyclist, birdwatcher	Belchertown								11-Nov-08
48		cyclist	other								11-Nov-08
49		cyclist	Northampton	1							14-Nov-08
50		cyclist, runner	other								12-Nov-08
51		cyclist	Northampton								11-Nov-08
52		cyclist, commuter	other	1							10-Nov-08
53		cyclist	Northampton								11-Nov-08
54		cyclist	Northampton	1							12-Nov-08
55		cyclist, commuter	Belchertown	1							9-Nov-08
56		cycist, walk, X-country ski, snowshoe	Amherst	1							18-Nov-08
57		cyclist, runner	other								11-Nov-08
58		cyclist, walker, runner	Amherst	1							9-Dec-08
59		cyclist	Northampton	1							12-Nov-08
60		cyclist	other	1							10-Nov-08
61		cyclist, rollerblade, skate, walker	other								14-Nov-08
62		cyclist	Northampton								11-Nov-08
63		cyclist, walker, X-country skier	Amherst	1							12-Nov-08
64		cyclist	other	1							4-Dec-08
Total				29	27	17	6	4	6	4	40

PUBLIC COMMENTS GROUPED BY GUIDING COMPONENTS AND TOPIC	Comments by Groups						Comments by Individuals					DCR Direction for Design
	NRTAC	MassBike PVC	Sen. Rosenberg	Rep. Scibak	Hadley Board of Selectmen	Chairperson, Hadley ConCom	Amherst	Belchertown	Hadley	Northampton	Other	
A. Accessibility												
Off-site Connections:												
Improve access to eastern part of Hampshire Mall (+ 2 post-it notes)	1											Accurately locate existing footpaths and make recommendation for a paved connector path within DCR ROW. DCR will use this mapping to discuss link with abutter. Confirm what is needed for MHD ROW approval for path up to ROW line.
Improve access to Hampshire Mall along So. Maple St.											1	
Improve connections to shopping in Hadley										1		
Access to Greenleaves Housing (2 post-it notes)												Show paved path apron from trail to ROW line in location of existing footpath. Confirm what is needed for MHD ROW approval for path up to ROW line.
Access to trail from Maple St. (2 post-it notes)												Several comments have been made regarding difficulty turning onto trail at this intersection. Determine the nature of the problem and make recommendation.
Provide connection to Snell St. at existing informal path from Swift Connector (post-it note)												Evaluate this area and make recommendation.
Pave access on east side of South East St. (esp. treacherous in fall) (post-it note)												Evaluate this area and make recommendation.
Pave access (no locations specified)							1					Formal, paved access to abutting properties requires consent of the property owner and a legal agreement with DCR. DCR limits these types of access points to publicly owned properties or business that provides a direct benefit to trail users that is in keeping with the policies of DCR. All paved access is subject to the same ADA/MAB compliance as DCR. DCR only provides paved access within its property; additional areas of paving outside the ROW are the responsibility of the abutter.
Additional access to destinations along trail such as shopping will increase its practical value.										1		
More access points and bike lanes around malls to promote cycling. "If people saw bike lanes, ROW signs and more bike racks, they may begin to get the message that cycling is a viable mode of transportation".							1					
User wishes trail went to Hampshire College										2		Provide directional signage at South Pleasant Street (Rt. 116) for Hampshire College. Include this location on Directional Signage list.
Connect NWRT to other trails and East Coast Greenway									1		1	
Extend the trail (no direction specified). Extend trail to Belchertown and beyond. Extend to Northampton, Easthampton and Belchertown.							2			1		
Universal Accessibility:												
Improve Universal accessibility at #8 Railroad Street from parking to trail; difficult slope with no ramps. (and post-it note)									1			DCR is pursuing an agreement with the abutter to provide paved access from the street to rail trail.
Pull-off and turn around places on trail are necessary for turning radius of accessible bikes											2	Provide turn-around areas along trail as per ADA and AASHTO
Provide larger paved area at Swift Connector for greater turning radius (post-it note)												Confirm that trail can be widened in this area and provide a turn-around where appropriate. Also, add fencing at top of steep slopes where needed.
User supports increasing accessibility of trail for their future needs										1		Use of Federal funding requires that this project conform to ADA and MA Access Board guidelines for universal accessibility.
UA is legitimate concern but should not dominate design; neither should adaptive cycle turning radius						1						
Equal access should be high priority in every aspect of the design											1	

PUBLIC COMMENTS GROUPED BY GUIDING COMPONENTS AND TOPIC	Comments by Groups						Comments by Individuals					DCR Direction for Design
	NRTAC	MassBike PVC	Sen. Rosenberg	Rep. Scibak	Hadley Board of Selectmen	Chairperson, Hadley ConCom	Amherst	Belchertown	Hadley	Northampton	Other	
B. Construction Issues												
Town of Hadley is celebrating its 350 year anniversary in 2009. Some events will occur on the Common. Anything they can do to coordinate with construction?					1							While planning the construction schedule, consult with town of Hadley to coordinate work in this area. Also, coordinate proposed design in the area of the Common with the town to ensure consistency with their historic preservation efforts.
Trailside Bike Shop closes for winter months around end of October/or part time until holidays.									1			To be determined. As shown in the trail user surveys, 42% of the respondents use the trail in the winter or year round and 42% report using the trail to commute to work. However, 100% of respondents use the trail in spring and 97.5% in summer & fall. Scheduling work in fall-winter-spring will inconvenience the fewest overall users, but will have the greatest impact on commuters. This should be considered when planning schedule.
What is the construction schedule?										1		
Communication during construction: need better closure communications so people, esp. bike commuters can plan their trip and not have to back track or travel dangerous roads. Complaint that MHD portable message boards used during 2008 interim repairs did not have a manned phone number only a recorded message. Provide a phone number that directs callers to a person who can answer questions.								1				This should be discussed with MHD and incorporated into construction specifications to the extent possible.
Provide "share the road" signs on roadways during construction when trail is closed							1					
Bizarre ROW variability. Must verify ROW lines before removing trees.						1						Yes. Careful cross checking on paper and in the field of proposed work and locations of ROW lines must be done before final design.
C. Cultural and Historical Elements												
Town of Hadley is celebrating its 350 year anniversary in 2009. Some events will occur on the Common. Anything they can do to coordinate with construction?					1							While planning the construction schedule, consult with town of Hadley to coordinate work in this area. Also, coordinate proposed design in the area of the Common with the town to ensure consistency with their historic preservation efforts.

PUBLIC COMMENTS GROUPED BY GUIDING COMPONENTS AND TOPIC	Comments by Groups						Comments by Individuals					DCR Direction for Design
	NRTAC	MassBike PVC	Sen. Rosenberg	Rep. Scibak	Hadley Board of Selectmen	Chairperson, Hadley ConCom	Amherst	Belchertown	Hadley	Northampton	Other	
D. Maintenance and Operations												
Take care of banks (no specific location or explanation)											1	Identify locations of erosion and design solutions for stabilizing slopes.
Some vegetation cutting needed (no specific location or explanation).											1	Identify locations of chronic overgrowth into trail shoulders and provide maintenance strategies in Vegetation Management Plan that are specific to plant species and location.
Snow plowing:												
Provide year-round maintenance of trail, including snow plowing			1				1		1	3		Although DCR is not able to commit operationally to snow plowing at this time, design to allow for possibility of snow plowing in the future. To the extent possible, facility design should not be the limiting factor to snow plowing.
"Plow it in winter just like the roads"										1		
Pursue options for plowing CT River Bridge for year round access/commuting		1										
Is it possible to plow half the trail for bike commuters and leave the other half for recreation?							1					
Targeted winter snow clearing, eg. Damon Rd. to Cross Path Rd.										1		
Plow for year round access between Damon Road and Cross Path Road via Coolidge Bridge and/or NWRT CT River Bridge	1											
Trash collection:												
There is a lot of trash at Amherst end of trail and around malls							1					Determine if windblown litter from parking lots can be restricted from ROW by plantings or other means and the feasibility of those solutions.
Although DCR has carry in / carry out policy, trash receptacles are needed at Damon Rd & Station Rd parking lots.							1					This operational issue should be coordinated between DCR Op's staff and the towns.

PUBLIC COMMENTS GROUPED BY GUIDING COMPONENTS AND TOPIC	Comments by Groups						Comments by Individuals					DCR Direction for Design
	NRTAC	MassBike PVC	Sen. Rosenberg	Rep. Scibak	Hadley Board of Selectmen	Chairperson, Hadley ConCom	Amherst	Belchertown	Hadley	Northampton	Other	
E. Natural Resources and Wildlife												
Vegetation:												
"Do not remove trees. Save trees and remove roots, if possible"							1					As per SOW, identify locations for woodland enhancement plantings especially in areas of invasive plant removals.
Bizarre ROW variability. Must verify ROW lines before removing trees.						1						Yes. Careful cross checking on paper and in the field of proposed work and locations of ROW lines must be done before final design.
Mark trees to be removed for public scrutiny before cutting to prevent black locust wipeout						1						Accurately identify large trees and trees within clear zones such as shoulders and site triangles to be removed on plans and spec's. Follow best practices for marking and approvals in the field.
Use native tree species for black locust replacement including conifers	1											All new plantings shall be species native to Central Massachusetts appropriate to the site conditions and local plant community
Plant conifers on south side of trail between Cross Path Rd and bridge to block glare during sunrise and sunset, shield headlights, diminish traffic noise	1											Propose a plant community including a dominance of conifers for this area.
Use root management instead of root barriers, ie. routine root cutting	1											see F. Path & Infrastructure Repair - Root Damage section
Saw cut tree roots to control upheaval									1			
Many black locust in Hadley section; other species also cause root damage not just locust						1						
Remove poison ivy between West St. & East St. (post-it note)												Identify areas of extensive poison ivy, include removal and management strategy in VMP.
Good that we're getting rid of bittersweet. Can we remove poison ivy, too?									1			
Beaver:												
Increase the number of culverts in beaver areas	1											Identify specific problems caused by beaver, evaluate potential solutions and make recommendations for construction and long-term management in BMMP.
People need a wayside to get off the trail for wildlife observation in beaver pond area							1					Incorporate an overlook/wayside in beaver pond area that includes a bird blind or similar structure, rest area, bike rack, etc., if possible.
"Elimination of the beaver. These incredibly destructive animals are living without predators and are out of control. At a minimum they should be culled regularly. They ruin the landscape, destroy shade and generally make the trail less pleasant."							1					The BMMP shall present solutions to trail damage caused by beaver that are consistent with environmental and wildlife protection regulations. In the O&M Manual, include tasks, schedules and methods for maintenance in this area.
Wetlands:												
Flagging missing in major swamp between East St. and Spruce Hill Rd.; swamp will impact ability to provide access from trail to Spruce Hill Road						1						Verify and map missing flagging. Identify alternatives for access outside of delineated wetlands.

E. Natural Resources and Wildlife (Continued)												
Wildlife:												
Eastern phoebes nest on top of lights in the Rt. 9 tunnel and in culvert under Spruce Hill Road.										1		Determine if this will affect project construction schedule and any restrictions related to nesting; include timing considerations in the construction schedule.
Remember birds and wildlife; protect their habitat including tree corridors in Hadley						1						Preserve and enhance existing moderate to high quality habitat. Design habitat enhancement for areas of low quality habitat where hazard tree and invasive species removals will create significant clearings.

PUBLIC COMMENTS GROUPED BY GUIDING COMPONENTS AND TOPIC	Comments by Groups						Comments by Individuals					DCR Direction for Design
	NRTAC	MassBike PVC	Sen. Rosenberg	Rep. Scibak	Hadley Board of Selectmen	Chairperson, Hadley ConCom	Amherst	Belchertown	Hadley	Northampton	Other	
F. Path and Infrastructure Repair												
Bridges:												
Interior width of structures will not allow widening to 10 ft./too costly						1						Interior width of tunnels to remain; evaluate potential to increase width on bridges.
"lower humps on the bridge for a smoother ride"										1		
Surface on bridges is bad with many sharp bumps							1					Remove safety hazards and obstructions to plowing on bridge decks.
Metal plates on bridges can be slippery when wet.										1		
Hazardous, angled plywood patch on the bridge (either Fort River or South East St. Bridges or both) (post-it note)												
Consider decking options to allow plowing or reduce snow accumulation on CT River bridge	1											Yes. <i>See D. Maintenance and Operations - Snow Plowing</i>
Drainage Issues:												
Poor drainage in area west of So. Pleasant St.; suspects issues with Amherst College field construction (post-it note)												Inventory and evaluate areas of poor drainage. Make recommendations for improvement.
Poor sub-drainage							1					
Pavement:												
Just re-coat existing trail pavement with driveway sealer									1			Identify areas to recycle pavement in place and full-depth reconstruction with asphalt.
Would thicker asphalt reduce potential for cracking, heaving, potholes, etc?	1											
Glass in pavement is over-rated -never had a flat tire in 200 miles of trail riding (in 2008).							1					
Next time get glass aggregate ground smaller							1					
Eliminate glass in pavement		1					1	1	1	4	1	
Improve surface.							3		1	3	3	
Glass is a problem. One user reports averaging 2-3 flat tires/week commuting until purchasing "highly puncture resistant" tires.							1			1		
Replace asphalt with softer, more permeable, eco-friendly surface; likely to be cheaper to install and maintain than asphalt.										1		
Cracks and drop-offs at edge of pavement are treacherous										1		Define acceptable tolerance for edge of pavement height in construction specifications, on detail dwgs, and in O&M Manual; review grading and drainage along entire length of trail to eliminate drainage problems that would cause future edge erosion.
Highlight intersections or points of interest on trail with change in pavement color and texture (large concrete circles used in Chicago park); "constrasting cues"										1		To highlight points of interest on trail, propose design solutions that will provide visual cues while providing durability and safety in the long run.

F. Path and Infrastructure Repair (continued)												
Root Damage:												
Improve the surface, especially "root heaves", will not ride when wet because a flat tire is guaranteed (no explanation provided).								1				Identify a strategy for long-term protection of pavement in the VMP that includes both methods and materials for construction and O&M. In specifications, include certified arborist to be present during construction for root pruning of trees to remain that will be within clear zone (pavement & shoulders).
Reduce tree roots / remove bumps							1			4	4	
Repave rippled section near Amherst College; between Old KC trail and Brickyard trail							1				1	
Root bumps are a problem. People stop using the trail because of them.							1			1		
Worst roots on trail are just west of Spruce Hill Road (post-it note)												
Interim repairs appreciated; finish job with long term solution for root heaves		1								1		
Shoulders:												
Need 2 foot wide shoulders on each side							1					Provide a minimum of 2 ft. on each side of trail for grass shoulders.
Trail Width:												
Don't widen trail at all; too expensive and too much impact to wetlands/vegetation							1	1			1	In accordance with existing AASHTO guidelines, widen to minimum of 10 feet, where possible. In areas of environmental sensitivity, such as wetlands, steep slopes or significant vegetation, widen as much as possible up to 10 ft.. Width of existing tunnels shall remain unchanged; however, add advance warning signage that trail narrows. Where possible, increase widths of travel way or shy distance on bridge decks without significant structural changes. Provide pedestrian lanes or wider shoulders in "Ped. Safe zones", where applicable.
Don't widen trail unless necessary												
Widen trail (no specified width).							2	1		4	5	
Widen trail to 10 feet where possible; avoid sensitive areas		1		1	1		2		1	1	1	
Variable trail width: narrow in sensitive areas and straight sections, wider at curves, intersections and congested areas.	1									2		

PUBLIC COMMENTS GROUPED BY GUIDING COMPONENTS AND TOPIC	Comments by Groups						Comments by Individuals					DCR Direction for Design
	NRTAC	MassBike PVC	Sen. Rosenberg	Rep. Scibak	Hadley Board of Selectmen	Chairperson, Hadley ConCom	Amherst	Belchertown	Hadley	Northampton	Other	
G. Safety												
Bollards:												
Consistent width of bollards at access points. Bollards at Station Rd. are too narrow to allow recumbent tandem tricycle, forcing rider to squeeze around side in bushes.										1		Design a standard intersection treatment that will allow the option of having or not having bollards in center of trail while still limiting access to cars. For example, a raised median with mountable, sloped curb that will allow a truck to drive over but restrict cars coupled with fixed bollards or boulders on each side of trail. Create a tight squeeze that will deter unintentional access.
Connecticut River Bridge:												
Need lighting at convergence of 3 trails on east end of CT River bridge at Damon Road parking lot.							1					Include lighting on the CT River Bridge. As per SOW, provide alternatives for hybrid lighting.
Need lighting on CT River Bridge							1					
This is a gauntlet at night because of people meeting up on bridge for sexual encounters on shorelines below							1					
Steep embankment at the sides of bridge where it meets the path need protections / fencing							1					Investigate the extent of the problem and improve safety in this area; lighting, wider intersection, 2-rail wood fence, etc..
There is a dangerous convergence of 3 trails on Damon Rd. side of bridge; people coming off bridge, entering from parking lot and eastbound from Damon Rd.; especially bad at night.							1					
Emergency Response:												
How do people identify their location without frequent street crossings or mile markers? Can we incorporate signage or GPS coordinates for emergency response?											1	Provide for emergency access to all sections of the trail, including the section from Spruce Hill Road to Rt. 9 tunnel. Make sure the typical intersection treatment does not impede access for emergency vehicles (width, height, removable barriers, etc.). Include signage for orientation of trail users and identification along trail, eg. Street names, mile markers, town lines, signage identifying bridges and tunnels including the river or street they cross.
Have we considered ambulance access for emergency response?											1	
Fencing:												
Need fencing at top of steep slopes especially at Snell Street											1	Inventory existing fence. Set a design criteria for install of new fence based on steep slopes and hazards close to trail shoulders. In general, limit fencing to what is necessary for safety.

G. Safety: (continued)												
Lighting: note - additional comments on lighting under the CT River Bridge section above.												
Install solar lighting between Bates St. and Damon Road (post-it note)												As per FHWA input on the project scope of work, this newly completed section from Damon Road to Woodmont Rd. receives minimal improvements, mostly signage and kiosks. Lighting is not included in SOW.
Install lighting under I-91 bridge over rail trail for evening riders; with light sensors to shut off at 10pm or so. (post-it note)												
Important for bike commuters to be able to rely on trail in low light conditions (evening, overcast days) - add lighting									1			Trail lighting will be limited to specific locations such as bridges, tunnels or parking lots east of Damon Rd. (see comment above). As per SOW, provide alternatives for hybrid lighting.
Install solar or other lighting intermittently along trail									2			
Riders complain about headlights from eastbound traffic on Route 9 in the area of the bike tunnel. Westbound riders ascending out of the tunnel get blinded by headlights during their evening commute. Request some kind of barrier or screening to block light.												Coordinate with MHD to install screening at this location between guardrail and top of wall/top of slope. An example is a wood slat fence located on new highway construction on Rt. 132/Hyannis.
Pavement markings:												
Paint and maintain yellow centerline; this statement started a discussion during the public meeting that ended in affirmative consensus/no opposition.						1			3	1	2	Provide intermittently dashed yellow line. Compare benefit of using 3' dash with 9' gap or 10' dash with 30' gap.
Paint crosswalks at Middle Street (Hadley in general) as soon as possible; don't wait for construction						1						Crosswalks shall be included in typical intersection detail and construction. Long-term maintenance of cross-walks must be coordinated between towns and DCR. DCR will initiate discussions with towns in early 2009.
Need crosswalk at West Street									1			
Route 9 tunnel approaches:												
West end of Route 9 tunnel is dangerous and too sharp. Mirror is not a good solution.										2		DCR is in discussions with MHD and the property owner to realign the trail on the north/west side of tunnel.
Straighten out tunnel (post-it note)												
East bound approach (west end) is hazardous; turn is too tight. East end is ok.		1										
Straightening tunnel approach not worth the cost "people can slow down this one time" (post-it note)												
Doesn't see a problem with tunnel approaches, limited sight distance is obvious; spend the money elsewhere on the trail							1	1				
Process of acquiring easements for realignment should have already begun (11/16/08)	1											
Senior Zones: (vicinity of Greenleaves and Golden Court senior housing)												
As per Beverly Weeks, many residents of Greenleaves are intimidated by fast cyclists and won't walk on trail. Post signs reminding people to call out "passing on left" to pedestrians									1			Evaluate feasibility of Ped. Safe zones in each direction of a primary trail connection to senior housing (Greenleaves and Golden Court) with safety features for slow and impaired walkers (esp. visual impairments). Include benches, warning and orientation/directional signage. If feasible, Ped. Safe zones should extend to local destination such as Hampshire Mall (3/4 mile) and UMass Swift Connector (1/2 mi.) for Greenleaves.
Need better access from Greenleaves to trail with signage marking entrance for those who are easily disoriented									1			
In the area of Greenleaves Senior housing, post signs to warn of slow, frail walkers; identify entrance to path										1		

G. Safety: (continued)												
Signage:												
At Damon Rd. need better signage for/to park & ride and alternative parking; Existing sign directs people to "Bread & Circus" which is now Whole Foods but does not provide directions.										1		Show parking areas on trail orientation map. Install directional signage at Damon Road Parking lot listing alternative parking in the area: NoHo municipal lot on Rt. 9, Mountain Farms Mall, Railroad Street. DCR will update website information to include alternative parking locations.
At Damon Road parking lot, post signs advising cyclists to “sound off” when passing										1		Include trail etiquette in "rules of the road" signage to be posted at primary and secondary trail head kiosks.
Name cross streets										1		Include signs for cross streets in typical at-grade crossing signage detail. Also, signage identifying rivers and cross streets at tunnels and bridges. Review and unify signage for intersecting hiking trails and Mill Lane parking lot for directional signage along trail. Identify all cross streets and rivers on trail orientation map. <i>See also, emergency response above.</i>
South Maple Street crossing:												
"Better crossing at mall area - very dangerous there".										1	1	In addition to the typical at-grade crossing treatment and advance warning signage, evaluate and recommend the most appropriate traffic controls for this intersection. Also, based on comments, look at how to make left turns off Maple St. onto the trail safer for cyclists.
Access onto trail from So. Maple St. is difficult because there is no trail shoulder and high traffic. Hard to make left turn across So. Maple.								1			1	
"Light at South Maple St." (assume this refers to traffic signal)										1		
Hazardous crossing: look at accident and police reports										1		
Traffic Controls at intersections:												
Concern that the use of splitter islands at trail entrances will make trail narrower and hazardous								1				Maintain min. 5 ft. lane width on both sides of splitter islands.
Improve controls for auto traffic at grade crossings such as 4-way stops, signage, flashing warning lights, pavement markings and texture; especially at South Maple St.	1											Yes.
"No rumble strips".										1		Tactile warning strips are required for ADA/MAB compliance. However, in typical at-grade crossing detail, provide smooth paving around strips for rollerblades and cyclists.
Difficult road crossing at Damon Rd., not all cars are recognizing the red light. Need more visual cues on roadway approach to trail.										1		Review and enhance existing advance warning MUTCD signage and pavement markings at Damon Road at-grade crossing to improve advance warning of traffic light on the road.
User appreciates light at Damon Road.							1					
Some motorists don't notice the crossing signal and drive through the redlight while people cross the trail. Need more visual cues for advance warning of intersection for motorists.										1		

G. Safety: (continued)												
Other:												
Road visibility (ability to see on-coming traffic) is bad at some intersections; especially East. St, Hadley							1					Develop a typical site line clearance detail for at-grade crossings relative to design speeds for the road and trail. This detail should be implemented in construction and included in O&M Manual for long-term maintenance. Removals and planting plans shall conform to this detail.
Install emergency call/aid boxes along trail										1		Experience on other trail systems has shown that these are highly subject to vandalism. For this reason, DCR does not plan to install call boxes along the rail trail.
Improve access across Route 9 and add bike lanes (outside project scope)									1			These routes are on town/state road ROWs and outside scope of DCR. Trail user reports that there is a petition at the Esselon Café seeking a cross walk at intersection of West St. & Rt. 9
Establish a statistical basis for addressing hazards by looking at accident and police reports.										1		Yes.
Unsafe access to trail from the Amherst Conservation area near Southeast St. due to weird angle; NOTE: multiple online survey responses state this as their main access point to trail.							1					Evaluate this access point and improve safety here.
Biggest safety issue is crossing from Woodmont Rd. to King St. across railroad tracks (acknowledged that this is outside scope of work)										2		Establish a primary trail head at Woodmont Rt. Including a trail map with local connector roads and directional signage. DCR to coordinate directional signage with NoHo

PUBLIC COMMENTS GROUPED BY GUIDING COMPONENTS AND TOPIC	Comments by Groups						Comments by Individuals					DCR Direction for Design
	NRTAC	MassBike PVC	Sen. Rosenberg	Rep. Scibak	Hadley Board of Selectmen	Chairperson, Hadley ConCom	Amherst	Belchertown	Hadley	Northampton	Other	
H. Trail User Experience												
Fundamental questions:												
Is trail part of larger statewide network or just another linear park?									1			Trail orientation map should include routes to nearby bike paths/trails and connections via local roads.
Is trail priority as recreational or transportation?									1			The rail trail is a multi-use / shared-use path. Although it serves both recreation and transportation uses, the design shall be focused on the multi-use nature of the trail and accommodating a diversity of trail users while minimizing potential conflicts and maximizing safety.
Is purpose of trail to encourage ridership or get riders off local streets? (re: bike lanes)									1			
trail is not purely recreational; it connects users with shopping centers, universities										1		
Support for (bike) commuting should be top priority with recreation secondary; needs of bicyclists should not be compromised to accommodate walkers.										1		
Bike Racks:												
Install bike racks in vicinity of bus stops/at intersections with bus routes										1		DCR can not install bike racks off-site. However, look at nearby bus stop routes and identify locations within ROW that would be suitable for bike racks to support that use. Evaluate the locations mentioned in comments for bike racks.
Install bike racks at southwest corner of West St. Susie Woods at 43 West Street, "people leave their bikes on her front lawn." (and post-it note)									1			
Install bike racks at northwest corner of West St. (post-it note)												
Overlooks & rest areas:												
Provide more places to sit and view nature.								1				Yes. DCR Op's requests that benches, picnic tables and other site furnishings be on paved surfaces rather than grass in order to reduce maintenance/mowing around them.
Provide places to sit and picnic in the open space near S. Maple Street.									1			Keep this grassy area open for informal picnicking. Evaluate reconfiguring existing boulders to simplify mowing while restricting access around perimeter.
Provide more air and water stations										1		Identify locations where installation of water bubblers would be feasible and appropriate with regard to water hookup, low vandalism, etc.
Restore bird blind (on Amherst Conservation land hiking trail).							1		1			Off-site and outside DCR jurisdiction. See F. Natural Resources and Wildlife - Beaver.
Install portable toilets at Station Rd. (referred to units at Mt. Tom that are used infrequently)							2					This is an operational issue outside scope of work. In the past, portable toilets have been severely vandalized at this location and DCR Op's is reluctant to place them there again.

H. Trail User Experience: (continued)												
Parking:												
Damon Rd. parking fills up fast.										1		
The rules governing parking at Damon Rd are not clear. People are getting parking tickets because they don't know when its ok to park. Commuters are parking; not clear if its bike commuters or park & ride motorists.							1					
									1			
Install parking lot on MHD property at Cross Path Rd. and Route 9 (post-it note)												
Create access to use Hampshire Mall parking instead of adding more DCR-owned parking	1											
Not enough parking and public access; people park at O'Connell's Convenience Plus/Shell Gas Station and walk through private property at 70 Russell St., Hadley												
Suggestion that people should be directed/able to park at the Hampshire County Juvenile Court parking lot in Hadley.	1						1		1			
Signage:												
Signage with names of trees and a brochure pointing out interesting plant and bird species to be seen along the trail.										1		
Provide better education on trail etiquette										1		
Need signage when crossing Damon Rd. towards Northampton: maps and distance to NoHo.									1			
Other:												
Commenter notes that Pan Am Railway labelled on orthophoto is actually Central Vermont Railroad; VERIFY OWNERSHIP (post-it note)												
I-91/Exit 19 – no tunnel under Damon Road; would degrade experience, increase crime, negative impacts to river and park		1										
DCR should promote bike commuting through UMASS ride share coordinator										1		
Provide access to CT river between rail trail and Coolidge Bridge for swimming (post-it note)												
Add bike lanes on town roads to make riding to the trail safer.									1			
Don't allow strip malls along trail											1	
User commutes year-round using studded bicycle tires for winter and spring because of snow.										1		
User has heard "a lot" of skepticism that design will be completed on time and Fall 2009 schedule is too idealistic.										1		

H. Trail User Experience: (continued)											
Aspects of trail that are appreciated by users:											
Sense of community and connections within the community-											
multi-use aspect of trail and community atmosphere of the trail							2		1	1	
stopping at Trailside Bicycles and Sophia's Praises - "significant assets to the trail".										2	
ease of use, access to shopping and ability to commute, access between towns							6		1	10	1
access to conservation lands										1	
access to the Hadley dike										1	
proximity of trail to their house										3	
Source of local pride and local revenue -											
User hopes to see increased usage									1		
As per local trail users and Trailside Bikes, there are many out of town visitors who use the trail									2		
Safety -											
bike/ped crossing at Damon Road										1	
safety of riding off road / Rt. 9; safe street crossings							3			4	1
safe place to run off road							1				
trail as safe place to bring grandchildren								1			
not having to use Rt. 9 to cross under I-91 (Woodmont Extension)										1	
lack of car exhaust compared to riding on road.										2	
Natural Beauty and connection to nature -											
wildlife - birding, beaver ponds.							2	1		1	
the "green tunnel" of trees							2				
views of agricultural land										1	
CT bridge/view of CT river from rail trail bridge.							1			3	1
the scenic/natural beauty of the trail.							3		1	6	2
Practical aspects -											
water fountain provided by the car dealership in Hadley.										1	
rest areas to sit								1			
length of trail for a good workout										2	
gentle grade changes											1

Appendices:

- A. Public Information Meeting Notes
- B. Written Comments
- C. Newspaper Clippings
- D. Pre-Design Trail User Surveys